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RACISM, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA AND ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION

Written statement* submitted by the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[15 January 2002]

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*This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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ENG

Islamophobia in Europe and North America

1 – The World Conference Against Racism was a unique opportunity for the international community once again to show its political determination for the fight against the awful phenomenon of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia. The Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV) participated at this conference actively and due to the importance of the Durban follow-up, would like to point out the following issues:

2 – Regarding xenophobia, we request the Commission on Human Rights to pay particular attention to the problem of "Islamophobia" and we call upon the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance to give appropriate attention to the problem of Islamophobia in Europe and North America, specially towards the Muslim community in those regions. It seems it is necessary for the Special Rapporteur to prepare a report on "Islamophobia" and the conditions of the Muslim community in Europe and North America – in particular about post-"September 11" incidents - for the Commission on Human Rights. Without a shadow of a doubt, terrorism in all shapes and forms is condemned and the international community must seriously fight a multilateral battle to eradicate this evil phenomenon. However, this subject matter is totally different from the conditions of migrant workers who with thousands of dreams and hopes are working in European countries, are constantly being harassed and oppressed for their religious beliefs.

3 – The Organization for Defending Victims of Violence has received a number of reports and would like to bring these cases to the attention of the Commission on Human Rights. On 26 September and 4 October 2001, Amnesty International reported a wave of racist attacks against individuals because of their appearances or religious beliefs. It seems that after September 11, a racist trend – which encourages xenophobia – has started. In northern Europe, North America and other parts of the world Muslims, Arabs and even Sikhs have been the targets of physical attacks and even shot at. A number of mosques have been bombed. A number of shops have been looted and even the closure of a school was reported. In all of these cases, most of the reports received have been of migrant workers or people who are in European countries and North America seeking asylum. Also, these discriminations include discrimination at workplace towards Muslims. Some of the media use "Islamophobia" in their presentation of the news and reports; even the Internet has not been spared of this kind of negative propaganda.

4 - The Organization for Defending Victims of Violence believes that governments should take necessary steps towards the prevention of racist actions against Muslims, Asians and Middle-Eastern people, whether they are nationals of those countries or foreigners. In any case these governments cannot speak of freedom and at the same time ignore the violated rights of the minorities living in their countries. The Organization for Defending Victims of Violence while condemning the terrorist attacks of September 11, believes that according to the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, the human rights of people should not be overlooked or neglected due to their skin colour or religious beliefs.